

[In these minutes: 1. Discussion of Work Plan, 2. Introduction of Buck Consultants]

HEALTH PLAN TASK FORCE (HPTF)

MINUTES

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1999

10:00 - 12:00

300 MORRILL HALL

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the view of, nor are they binding on the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Dick McGehee (Chair), Linda Aaker, Allan Baumgarten, Avner Ben-Ner, Richard Butler, Carol Carrier, Amos Deinard, Keith Dunder, Robert Fahnhorst, Bart Finzel, Bev Hall, Christopher Hulla, Kris Roberts Jones, Kathryn Pouliot, Robert Sonkowsky, Larry Thompson, Gavin Watt.

REGRETS: Priscilla Pope.

ABSENT: George Green, David Hamilton, Harlan Smith.

1. CHAIR'S REPORT

Dick McGehee said that Buck Consultants had been identified by Human Resources as the University's choice to investigate the possibility of separation from the state health plan. The consulting company was approved by Purchasing and the Regents. Only two questions were asked by the Regents and seemed to be expressions of support.

2. DISCUSSION OF WORK PLAN

Dick McGehee then distributed a draft work plan to the task force. He started by noting that the task force has changed from the time that it was constituted, and that there would be more changes with the expansion of the membership. The task force has discussed its possible reconstitution, such as into an administrative committee with an official charge that would carry more authority. Professor McGehee said that he has resisted this since the most important objective is for the task force to produce a credible report which will solicit thoughtful feedback from all constituencies before any decision is reached.

Q: What groups will be presented with task force report?

A: All relevant groups including those who will have representation on the task force.

Task force members responded favorably to the proposed work plan and suggested a few wording changes. A vote was then taken and the work plan was approved as amended.

Dick McGehee then said that new members are still being sought for unrepresented groups and that progress will be reported at the next meeting.

Lastly, he asked how the progress of the task force should be distributed to all relevant groups. It was suggested that publications such as Brief, Kiosk, the Minnesota Daily, and the AHC newsletter be utilized. Employee Benefits also publishes a newsletter which is sent to designated employee benefit contact people. A special edition could be printed that would focus on the task force progress and would ask the contact people to circulate the information to their entire departments. Additionally, the web site, task force minutes, and direct information from task force members would be useful.

3. INTRODUCTION OF BUCK CONSULTANTS

Three of the members of the Buck Consultants team, Christopher Hulla, Kris Roberts Jones, and Allan Baumgarten, were introduced to the task force members. Professor McGehee then asked them to explain the process for the next three months.

Christopher Hulla explained that this would be an intense period of time in terms of collecting demographic and claim data as well as conducting focus groups and surveys to discuss topics such as access and plan options. The current and future health care environment will also be assessed including where SEGIP is heading versus what the University foresees as its needs. Task force input will be important during this process as to what will be the hurdles to separation as well as pros and cons of the current situation. Individual interviews with members would also provide additional input. Experience data from health insurance carriers will be requested.

Dick McGehee stated that the task force has meetings scheduled on January 6 and 20. Additionally, task force members completed a lists of issues two years ago. This can be used as a starting point for task force input. In terms of what the state is deciding to do, Robert Fahnhorst, Linda Aaker, and himself will have some information, but there will likely be many questions that will not be able to be answered until the state makes its final decision.

Christopher Hulla said that the task force issues can be used a starting point for the focus groups. These groups will then define the survey questions, which can be brought to the task force for feedback before being used. In terms of timelines, the first level groups should be completed within two weeks to define the survey questions. The questions, as well as who to survey, could then be discussed by the task force at the January 20 meeting.

Carol Carrier then pointed out that the University is heading into Winter Break, during which time most groups will not be meeting and few people will be around campus to participate in focus groups and surveys.

Dick McGehee stated that the timeline could be modified so that focus groups would occur in January with surveys conducted in February and the final plan design in March. It will push things back a little bit, but it cannot be helped with the break.

Q: Are the focus groups a random sampling of people?

A: This depends since the results are not scientific. Sometimes groups are proposed that have common critical objectives but opposing views of how to reach them. Confidentiality is also not a conscious selection factor since advertisements are placed for volunteers.

Q: What is the size of the focus groups?

A: 15 - 20 is an ideal size.

Q: Will focus group participants be given information in advance of the meeting?

A: Sometimes information is provided and other times it is useful to catch people off guard and hear what their first thoughts are on the subject.

Q: What is the time limit for the groups?

A: Usually 30 - 45 minutes is a good time frame.

Q: Will a focus group be held with the President's Executive Council?

A: Probably not.

A committee member said that during the focus groups and surveying the consultants must be careful how they propose the question of cost versus selection. Hypothetically, most people would say that an increase would justify additional selection factors, but when faced with the bill their opinion changes. It might also be important to inform employees that they are part of the state health plan since most do not realize this.

The consultants said that the survey tool would look at current utilization of health care as well as what employees additionally need out of their plan. The survey is better for identifying plan weaknesses and strengths, as well as needs instead of price.

Carol Carrier then asked whether it might not be useful for the consultants to spend one day on each campus. This would solicit more reliable feedback and boost credibility for coordinate campus buy-in to a final report. Existing structures on campus could be used as focus groups.

In conclusion, the committee discussed what committees should be used as focus groups and how they should be contacted.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

Robert Fahnhorst distributed a sheet detailing the changes in open enrollment figures. One fact he noted was the continuing decrease in enrollment in the State Health Plan.

Q: For the bottom totals, why is there a net change of ten fewer people for single coverage?

A: It is possible that these people were on 50% appointments and decided not to renew their insurance this year.

Q: Are there more University members than state members in the Classic plan?

A: There is no way to tell from the numbers and I am not sure.

Q: Would it be possible to forward the names of people who switched coverage to the consultants? It would give them a list of people to start with since they were not satisfied with the service or cost that was being provided to them.

A: It would be possible to make copies of people's applications who switched coverage.

Professor McGehee thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Rebecca Hippert
University Senate